

UN Decade “Water for Life” (2005-2015)

General Assembly: a legitimate answer for the Water Crisis.

The 63rd. session of the General Assembly is taking place during very troubling times. Existing structural problems like armed conflicts, poverty, lack of access to health and education, trade injustice and environmental degradation are aggravated by unprecedented energy, food and financial crisis. We are in a very dangerous situation originated and aggravated by human selfishness, greed and lack of democratic governance.

Among the priorities identified by the President is the need to implement and achieve the goals of the United Nations Decade: “Water for Life” (2005-2015), adopted by Resolution 58/217 in February 2004. In its preamble the resolution recognizes that water is critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and the eradication of poverty and hunger, and is indispensable for human health and well-being.

Water issues are currently under the agenda of a profusion of a complex network of intergovernmental organizations, hybrid public-private constituencies, transnational corporations and non governmental organizations.

As we are approaching the first half of the Water for Life decade, the global water crisis deepens. There is an urgent need to search for sustainable development solutions and to discuss at the highest political level issues like water governance and access, water scarcity, the role of water in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals, water quality, water conservation, sanitary infrastructure, privatization, the role of agriculture, transboundary water issues (also under the agenda of the International Law Commission and the Sixth Committee) and conflicts, science and technology, informed and legitimate water assessments, climate change, adaptation, natural disasters, gender, equity and human rights issues related to water. The international crisis described above will disproportionately affect the poor and the water sector is critical for their survival.

The General Assembly is the most legitimate political global body. Its unique representativeness and democratic character make it the natural place for debating, affirming principles and providing answers for the global water crisis. The General Assembly could enable the dialogue of governments and civil society organizations towards human and global solutions on water conservation, world water justice and democracy, establishing a new decision making and governance international structure for water issues. It will also be an opportunity to send a clear signal for international development agencies to focus and redirect its actions towards water services that fulfill human needs and in particular those of the neediest sectors. At the same time, this unique multidimensional issue, water, would be a meaningful possibility for the restoration of the Assembly’s powers, one of the other priorities for this session.

Water and poverty are strong symbols of inequality of the world, and the General Assembly has to perform a central role in fighting this injustice. The Assembly must be the democratic and unifying factor that will transform the current pessimism in optimism by reaching political commitments that can formulate a path working toward equity and justice and with the establishment of social, scientific and technological innovations. The President, in consultation with Member States and competent UN agencies, will inform the future concrete steps to start advancing these objectives.